

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-6, 9, 12-20, 24, 25, and 27-31 are presented for consideration. Claims 1, 9, 12, 14, 16, 24, and 30 are independent. Claims 7, 10 and 22 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1-5, 9, 12-20, 24, 25, 27 and 29-31 have been amended to clarify features of the subject invention. Support for these changes can be found in the original application, as filed. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection set forth in the Office Action.

Claims 1-7, 9, 10, 12-20, 22, 24, 25 and 27-31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph. The Examiner asserted that the specification, while being enabling for substituting nitrogen and helium in an X-ray lithography exposure chamber, does not reasonably provide enablement for any gases in any environment as claimed. For the reasons set forth in Applicants' Request for Reconsideration filed on January 28, 2005, the Examiner's contentions are respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, Applicants note with appreciation that claims 1-7, 9, 10, 12-20, 22, 24, 25 and 27-31 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph. To expedite allowance of this application, Applicants have amended claims 1-5, 9, 12-20, 24, 25, 27 and 29-31 in light of the Examiner's comments. Notably, these claims are now directed to X-ray exposure apparatus and related methods, in which nitrogen is substituted for helium. Applicants submit that these changes overcome the

rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph. According, Applicants submit that claims 1-6, 9, 12-20, 24, 25, and 27-31 should now be deemed allowable.

Applicants request the Examiner to contact their undersigned representative should any matters be deemed outstanding precluding allowance of this application.

Applicants further submit that this Amendment After Final Rejection clearly places this application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicants believed that the prior response placed the application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of the instant Amendment, as an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is requested under 37 CFR 1.116.

Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance are also requested.

Applicants' attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven E. Warner", is written over a horizontal line.

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